

AN INTERVIEW WITH AN AWAKENED MASTER

LUANGPOR TEEAN

The Singular Quality of an Ordinary Monk

by Vatana Supromajakr, M.D.

English translation by Bhikkhu Nirodho

If you had had the chance to meet Luangpor Teean, you would probably have seen him as just another elderly monk, one who was calm and spoke little, very like other elderly monks that can be met with in this country. But if you had given some attention to observing him, you would have noticed that, along with his calmness, he was at all times very collected, alert and aware of himself.

In 1957, when he was nearly forty-six, Luangpor Teean left his home with firm determination not to return unless he found the Truth. He went to Wat Rangsimukdaram, Tambol Pannprao, Amphur Tabon in Nongkai Province and practiced a simple form of bodily movements except that he did not follow the formal rituals and recitation of the words like others did. What he did was only being aware of the movements of the body and mind. Within a couple of days, on the early morning of the eleventh day of the waxing moon, the eighth month of 1957, his mind reached the End of Suffering completely without traditional rituals or teachers [\(source\)](#).

When we had the chance to ask him about various problems, we experienced the uniqueness of this ordinary monk, a person who was nearly illiterate and who emphasized and taught the single subject of *sati* (sustained awareness of oneself) at all times. He exhibited very clear wisdom of the most penetrating kind in responding to our questions. His answers to all questions were remarkable to such an extent that we could label it 'incredible' that a person lacking the formal education that we so value had the ability to answer and explain in a way that was at once so simple, clear, deeply meaningful, precise and clearly understandable, explanations capable of fully putting our doubts to rest.

How we label or categorize Luangpor Teean is of no importance. What is important is his teaching. His answers, even to very simple and basic questions, are full of value, just like the lighting of a lamp in a dark place: they dispel the darkness, creating a brightness that

helps us to see the way and gives rise to the illumination of wisdom. His answers will be of benefit, to a greater or lesser extent, to those who aspire and are in search, those who are lost in darkness: unknowing, doubtful, not understanding.

During the final five years of Luangpor Teean's life, I and my medical colleagues who were caring for him asked him questions from time to time in order to ease our doubts. The following answers, teachings and views have been gathered and recorded in order to make them available to those who might find them of use. There is no intention here to praise or display devotion to Luangpor Teean, nor to promote or try to create faith in him: it is the reader's responsibility to consider the following with deliberation and discrimination, to examine and understand by oneself -- this is a responsibility and a right that we should all respect.

1. Religion

Luangpor Teean said of religion that "religion is the person". When we heard or read this, we failed to understand, therefore we asked him, "Is religion really 'the person' or not?"

He answered as follows: "'Religion' is merely a word that we use to label the teaching of a person by a person who is considered to understand the truth or nature of human life. Such teachings are various. If we speak of 'religion', it might give rise to doubts and arguments and disputes, therefore please allow me to not speak of this. But if you want to know about the actuality, the true nature of our life (Dhamma), I will tell you; when you have understood, your doubts about 'religion' will disappear."

2. Why Did He Search For Dharma?

I once asked Luangpor Teean how it came about that he was inspired to search for Dharma. He explained that he had strictly followed traditional practices his whole life, had observed the moral precepts devoutly, made merit and practised generosity at every opportunity, and offered Kathina robes each year, but that on the last occasion that he had organized the Kathina offerings, a dispute concerning the merit-making arose between him and members of his family.

I therefore," he continued, "considered as follows: how was it that, having kept the precepts, made merit, and practised generosity to the fullest, I could still have suffering arise within my mind? In light of this, I decided from that moment on to seek true Dharma, that which would free me from the grasp of *dukkha* (Suffering)."

3. Dharma Is Not Clothing

Luangpor Teean once told us that for a long time he had believed, incorrectly, that Dharma was something outside our body, something external like clothing that has to be sought for and then put on and worn. But in actuality, Dharma is already present within us right now.

4. The Study Of Dharma

Referring to the study of Dharma, Luangpor Teean said, "To study the Dharma merely for the purpose of discussion and debate is of little use. We have to apply and use it, and practise it to the fullest, then it will yield great benefit."

5. The Story Of Venerable Ananda

I was always in doubt as to why the [Venerable Ananda](#), in spite of listening to, hearing and knowing the teachings of the Buddha (i.e. the Dharma) more completely than anyone else, was not fully Awakened to actual Dharma.

Luangpor Teean explained: "Venerable Ananda knew a lot about the Buddha, that is true, but he did not yet know himself. After the Buddha passed away, Ananda studied to really know himself, and therefore succeeded in attaining full Awakening."

6. Luangpor Teean Teaches "Outside the Texts"?

I once mentioned to Luangpor Teean that, whereas people generally hold strongly to the *Tipitaka* (the Pali Canon) as the authoritative text when studying Buddhism, when he himself taught he hardly ever mentioned the *Tipitaka*.

Luangpor pointed out, "The Buddha's Teaching was recorded in the *Tipitaka* several hundred years after the Buddha passed away, and this text was then copied and recopied over a period of thousands of years. The teachings were probably recorded very well, but it is possible to doubt that the reader will now understand what those who recorded the teachings meant. For me to refer merely to the texts all the time would be like guaranteeing the truth of the claims of another, claims of which I am not certain. But the things that I tell you I am able to guarantee, because I speak from my own direct experience.

The text is like a map: it is suitable for those who don't know the way to go, or have not yet arrived at the destination. For one that has arrived, the map no longer means anything.

Another point about the *Tipitaka* is that it was written in the language used in a certain region of India, and was consequently appropriate for people from that area or for those who have learned to read that language. But Dharma taught by the Buddha is not something that can be monopolized by anybody: it transcends language, race, gender, and era. If we really know Dharma, we will teach it and express it in our own language, in our own words.

The study of the *Tipitaka* is good in itself, but don't attach to and get lost in the specific words used. Mangoes, for example, are referred to by different words in different languages; don't fall into dispute over words and interpretations or become obsessed with the notion that only one word correctly names the fruit, while meanwhile neglecting the

mango and letting it go rotten. Anyone that eats a mango must know the actual taste of the fruit, no matter what name it is given, or even if it is given no name at all."

7. Deceived By Thought

Luangpor Teean said that we human beings are always thinking, just like the ever-flowing current of a river. Being lost in and deceived by thought is like scooping out water and storing it up. But if we have *sati* (awareness) seeing thought immediately as it really is, it is like the water flowing freely up and passing on by. Being lost in and deceived by thought gives rise to suffering.

8. Suffering

In discussing [Samudaya](#), the cause of suffering, someone once asked Luangpor Teean to explain what suffering was. Luangpor placed an object on his hand and then clenched the hand tightly, making a fist. He then turned the fist over and opened the hand. Indicating the thing that had dropped from his hand to the ground, he pointed out, "This is suffering."

The questioner understood immediately that suffering is a thing that we conceive and assume and then seize hold of firmly, and that it can be released. Luangpor said that someone who can understand this quickly is one with wisdom.

9. What Is It Like When "The Rope Breaks"?

In reading Luangpor Teean's account of his experience of practising Dharma, it is difficult to understand what is meant when, in describing the final stage of his practice, he uses the simile of it being as if a rope that had been stretched tightly between two posts suddenly broke in the middle and could never again be reattached.

When questioned about this, Luangpor elaborated: "Words are merely sounds that are used by convention to mean certain things, but the words that can explain the 'state' about which you are asking don't exist. If we were to place a certain amount of white paint one centimetre away from a similar amount of black paint and to mix them until they were thoroughly blended, we would name the colour in the middle 'gray', wouldn't we? But if the white paint were placed ten metres away from the black paint and the two were gradually mixed until well-blended, you would find that there were no words to explain the shade of the colour at any one point in such a way that another person would know that shade: the colour must be experienced directly.

Have you ever looked at rain clouds? They appear to be different shapes and forms. But if we are in an aircraft and fly into the clouds, we don't see them as we did before we entered.

There are no words to explain the 'state' you are asking about: it is beyond language. It's useless speculating or trying to imagine it, or thinking to oneself that it has to be like this, like that: you must know for yourself, you must see for yourself, you must experience it."

10. Trivial Problems

Luangpor Teean once commented that many of the people who came to see him asked him only about *trivial* problems, such as how much merit they would acquire by doing such-and-such, or whether it was true that they would be reborn to a new life after death, and so on. It was seldom that somebody would ask what Buddhism really teaches and how that teaching was to be applied in practice, or would ask what it was that needed to be done in order to reduce suffering. Luangpor responded only to what he was asked: it would, he felt, have been inappropriate for him to himself raise and answer questions of substance.

11. Reality And Supposition

Luangpor Teean said that humans are long-lived, and think and remember much more than do animals. When people live together in large communities, it becomes necessary to establish rules and conventions for the sake of social harmony. As time passes, however, later generations come to regard these conventions that have been created by the human mind as being independent reality. When someone points out that, far from being reality, these things are actually shared suppositions, most people will refuse to see this: this refusal is very common.

What is called 'money', for example, is actually paper," Luangpor remarked. "When we try to use it, people accepting it gives it its value; if people won't accept it, then it is no more than paper. In our current society we use money as a means of exchange. Anyone who has no money will find it difficult to live. With money we can buy convenience and comfort, but the extinction of *dukkha* (Suffering) is something no amount of money can buy."

12. The Practice Of Dharma

I once asked why Dharma is taught and practised differently in different meditation centres, even though we all have the Buddha in common as our original teacher.

Luangpor Teean replied, "This is quite normal. It is said that even in the Buddha's time there were 108 different groups, each one claiming that its teaching was correct and that the other 107 groups were following wrong views. We must use our intelligence and consider carefully for ourselves. To be either gullible or sceptical and of closed mind, each is equally misguided. Any way of practice that leads to the extinguishing of *dukkha* (Suffering) is proper and correct. As far as Dharma itself is concerned, all who know its actuality will have the same perception."

When somebody asked whether various forms of Dharma practice other than the one he taught were good or not, Luangpor answered, "Good for them, but not for us."

13. Does Practising Insight Meditation Lead To Madness?

We once asked Luangpor Teean whether it was true, as some psychiatrists had charged, that practising *vipassana* (insight) meditation caused people to become mad.

Luangpor answered, "A person who doesn't know and isn't truly familiar with his or her own mind as it actually is, that is a mad person. Practising *vipassana* meditation is studying to know one's own real mind. If practising meditation ever does lead to madness, it is not *vipassana*."

14. *Nirvana*

Luangpor Teean told us of a conversation he had once had with a layman who, after an act of making merit, expressed the wish that his merit-making result in him entering *Nirvana* (the extinction of Suffering) in the future.

Luangpor asked him, "When do you expect to arrive at *Nirvana*?"

After I have died," the villager replied.

Do you really want to get to *Nirvana*?" Luangpor inquired.

Yes, I really want to get there."

Luangpor then said, "Well if that's the case then you should die as soon as possible and then you'll reach *Nirvana* very quickly."

The villager was bewildered: "But I don't want to die yet."

But since you want to go to *Nirvana*, why don't you want to die quickly? This shows that you have misunderstood," Luangpor pointed out to the villager. "The Buddha never taught people to go to *Nirvana* when they had already died, but he taught living people to reach *Nirvana* while still alive."

15. Why Did He Ordain?

Since apparently Luangpor Teean had understood Dharma while he was still a layman, why had he ordained as a monk? "The monkhood serves as the institution representing or symbolizing those who practise the Buddha's Teaching well, the true Sangha," Luangpor explained. "Being a monk makes it much easier to teach people about *dukkha* (Suffering) and its extinction."

16. A Rock Pressing Down The Grass

I once asked Luangpor Teean about the usefulness of sitting practising [Concentration Meditation](#). He replied that this kind of meditation was widely practised before the time of the Buddha. "Such meditation gives rise to a tranquil state of mind, but that is only temporary. When we emerge from the concentrated state, our mind is still subject to greed, anger and delusion, it has not really changed. It is like placing a rock upon the

grass. Even though the grass under the rock may wither, as soon as it is exposed to sunlight the grass will grow again. This is different from [Insight Meditation](#) (*vipassana*), which gives rise to knowing and understanding, to wisdom, the mind changing to a fundamentally better, more normal condition."

17. Vessantara

We once asked about the case of Vessantara, who is traditionally held up as the very model of the perfection of generosity. Yet what he did seems to be an act of great irresponsibility towards his wife and children. Is it true that his act of giving away his family led to him being reborn as the Buddha?

Luangpor Teean answered, "The story of Vessantara is a story that has been passed down through many, many generations. If you think that it is true, then you should follow his example, and give your wife and children to the labourers or farmers in order to help them in their work, and thus you will perfect yourself and become a Buddha. But let me present to you the following comparison: that what you have with you now, what you are as bound to as to your children or wife, are greed, anger and delusion: give them away, relinquish them completely: are you able to understand this?"

18. Believing

Luangpor Teean always said that we should neither believe something immediately nor reject it immediately: we should consider and deliberate very carefully first, or put it to the test, and then either believe it or not.

Luangpor remarked that the history of the Buddha provides examples on this point. Angulimala was someone who believed too readily. He always followed his teacher's instructions, and even when ordered to kill a great number of people, he did so. On the other hand we have the case of the recluse [Upaka](#), who was the first person to meet the Buddha after the Buddha's Awakening. Even though Upaka recognized in the Buddha characteristics that aroused trust and confidence, he was not willing to believe that the Buddha had become Awakened by himself, and so went on his way, and missed the opportunity to learn from the Buddha.

19. Those Who Understand His Teaching

We once asked Luangpor Teean about the number of people who, after hearing him teach Dharma or after having been instructed by him, could understand his teaching. "Probably no more than ten to fifteen percent," Luangpor answered. "This is quite normal. A person who is developed will be ready and able to understand. But most people interested in Buddhism are still firmly attached to customary practices, such as the making of merit."

20. People Protect Morality / Morality Protects People?

Luangpor Teean often asked, "Why do we observe moral precepts in a manner similar to taking care of a glass so as to prevent it from breaking? Why don't we live and practise to

have morality, that is, the mind that is normal, truly in our lives? Morality will then take care of us, rather than we having to worry about looking after morality."

21. Merit

I asked Luangpor Teean, "Does making merit really give me merit?"

Luangpor asked in turn, "What do you understand merit to be?"

When I told him that I understood merit to be a good outcome or destiny that we receive after we die, in exchange for the good that we have done, he asked, "Have you ever heard the monks' chant that lists the benefits of making the Kathina offering, that it will lead to us reaching heaven where the sprites, numbering 500 or 1000 beings, will be our dedicated followers? Now consider the number of temples that there are in Thailand. If there is a Kathina offering every year in every temple, where could enough sprites be found for everyone who made merit? We imagine in this way that monks are like bank accountants responsible for calculating the interest owed to us after we die, do we?"

I further inquired of Luangpor, "If this is so, what is your view of the making of merit by giving material things, as is generally done nowadays?"

He answered as follows: "Making merit by giving material things is a good thing to do, but it is like husked rice, which is of use only for growing seedlings. If we are to benefit from eating rice, we must eat boiled or steamed rice, not uncooked or husked rice. To be attached to making merit by giving material things in a superstitious way is one form of delusion: to be lost in darkness, even if in this case it is in contrast to Dark Luminosity, a white darkness.

Merit at its highest, in its consummation, is to really know oneself, to be without *dukkha* (Suffering)."

22. Inflexible

I once invited Luangpor Teean to go to teach a man whom I respected, a person who had strong faith in and attachment to traditional forms of merit-making. When Luangpor returned after meeting the man, I asked about their encounter.

That man is inflexible," Luangpor responded, "a person of closed mind. Have you read the history of the Buddha? When the Buddha was newly Awakened, before he went to Benares to teach his former companions, the Five Ascetics, he had thought to seek out his former teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, in order to teach them the liberation he had attained, but then he came to know that both these teachers had already died. This is something I have some doubt about; since the Buddha-to-be had parted from his two teachers not so long before, I am not certain whether their deaths were physical or not: but what had certainly died were their minds."

23. Monastic Ranks

In the time of the Buddha there were no such things as monastic ranks. Why, we asked Luangpor Teean, do we make so much of hierarchy and rank in modern Thailand? Is it a good thing or not? He answered, "Monastic rank is the creation and concern of society. You could call it either good or bad, whichever you wanted to, but we have to live in their society."

24. Can Studying Buddhism Make Somebody A Bad Person?

We once inquired why it was that some of the men who ordained as monks, studied to a high level, and subsequently left the monkhood, could later behave in evil ways, often worse than ordinary people who had never ordained and studied Buddhism.

Luangpor Teean answered, "Such a person studies only books, studies only theory, but never studies himself and therefore never knows himself."

25. Bowing In Respect To The Orange Robe

I once mentioned to Luangpor Teean that it is hard for us to know whether a monk really is a true monk or merely a parasite upon the religion; we simply see someone with his head shaved and wearing the orange robes, and we immediately pay respect.

Luangpor gave his point of view: "If we bow in respect only to the orange robe itself, then when we pass through Sao Ching Cha, where the whole length of the road is lined with shops selling monks' requisites, wouldn't we have to bow to each and every such shop, from one end of the road to the other?"

26. Auspicious

Luangpor Teean told us how on one occasion, while leading the ceremonial chanting for auspiciousness in a villager's house, he had asked for a very large bowl to use in place of his small alms-bowl in the making of holy water, an integral part of the ceremony.

When the chanting had been completed, and the water in the bowl had been made into holy water, instead of sprinkling it over the people present, as is customarily done, Luangpor took the large bowlful of holy water and threw it all over the floor of the house, saying, "Everybody, please join together and help to put things in order, help to clean the floor: this is what is auspicious. Using holy water merely to sprinkle upon ourselves, we might suffer allergic reactions to the leaves floating in the water, break out in an itching rash, and have to waste money on buying medicine to treat ourselves: now how could something like that be auspicious!"

27. The Funeral Ceremony

Once we asked Luangpor Teean, "When we hold a funeral ceremony, does the dead person benefit from the ceremony that we perform for him?"

Luangpor answered, "The funeral ceremony is just a tradition created by those who are still alive because they are greatly perturbed by the death of a person. Whether the dead person will benefit from the ceremony or not is something that will always be open to doubt. But what is certain is that the officiating monks will benefit. Do we think that the monks can fulfil the functions of postmen?"

28. A Monk Bows To A Layperson

Luangpor Teean related how once, when he was in Laos, he accepted an invitation from a villager to take part in a ceremony where traditional chants for extending a person's lifespan were to be performed for the villager's mother. But at the ceremony Luangpor did not chant, so the sponsor did not offer him the usual requisites.

Luangpor then explained to the villagers that in order to extend the lifespans of our parents we must behave well towards them -- it's not enough to merely invite the monks to chant, in the hope that our parents will consequently live long lives. And he then led the children in bowing to their parents for the first time, he himself setting the example.

The villagers present at that time immediately became very agitated, considering what Luangpor had done to be a violation of tradition: they had never seen or heard of a monk bowing to laypeople. Luangpor therefore explained to them, "When I led the children to follow me in bowing to their parents to pay them respect, I did not bow to the laypeople at all; rather I bowed to myself, because I was capable of teaching people to understand the true way to actually prolong life."

29. The Spirit House

I once asked Luangpor Teean about the guardian spirit of the land one's house is built on, who is considered to reside in the spirit house that we provide for it. Does, I wanted to know, the spirit really have supernatural powers such that it can either benefit or severely punish the person that owns the house?

Just think," said Luangpor. "If the guardian spirit really does have supernatural powers, why doesn't it create a house for itself, why doesn't it create its own food to eat, why does it have to wait for people to build a house for it and to provide it food in supplication? And the food given to it is always such a tiny amount: would the spirit ever be able to satisfy its hunger?"

30. Buddhist Amulets

Before I got to know who he was, I met Luangpor Teean at a time when I was deeply interested in Buddhist amulets. With the purpose of requesting an amulet from him, I tried to impress him by showing him a very special and valuable amulet that I owned, boasting that my amulet was very ancient, having been made 700 years ago.

What," he asked me, "is this amulet made of?"

I told him that it was earthenware, made of baked clay that was extremely hard and the fine brown colour of tamarind paste, and that it contained a rich abundance of various minerals.

Luangpor responded, very simply, "Earth of all kinds originated at the same time as this planet came into being. Your amulet is actually no more ancient than the soil we trod upon before we entered this house."

Just that one statement alone made me free to take that amulet from around my neck, relinquishing, with the highest confidence, my attachment to such things.

~~~~~

When someone once asked if it was good to wear a Buddhist amulet around one's neck, Luangpor replied, "It's good, but there is something much better than wearing an amulet. Would you like that?"

~~~~~

Luangpor was on one occasion asked by a man whether the amulet he owned really had the supernatural, miraculous power widely attributed to it.

Is its maker still alive?" Luangpor asked the man.

When informed that the amulet's maker was long dead, the amulet having been passed down as an heirloom, Luangpor commented, "Since even its maker himself has died, how can we hope that this thing can help us to avoid death?"

31. Ordaining And Disrobing

I had to cut out almost the whole of Luangpor Teean's stomach in order to remove the malignant tumor that had developed there, so I subsequently advised him that he should eat food in small quantities but at frequent intervals. Luangpor stated that to do so would involve eating after midday, which would constitute laxness in the Discipline and would invite gossip and censure; in such circumstances he would prefer to disrobe, because it made no difference to him whether he was a monk or not: his mind was stable and would change no more.

32. "Do You Know Luangpor Teean?"

Luangpor related how one day, while he was at Ramathibodi Hospital waiting for a session of radiotherapy, a man seated nearby struck up a conversation with him, at an early point of which he asked Luangpor whether he was acquainted with Luangpor Teean.

Luangpor replied, "Well, yes, I know him somewhat."

After they had discussed Dharma for some time, the man became suspicious and asked, "You are Luangpor Teean, aren't you?"

Luangpor admitted it was so.

33. The Concerns Of The Buddha

We once discussed the nature of [Sarira](#), the relics of the Buddha, whether they were bone that had transformed itself to crystal or merely burned bone. When asked for his opinion, Luangpor Teean remarked, "The concerns of the Buddha are not our concerns. Our concerns are not the Buddha's concerns. But the Buddha taught us that we should know fully all that concerns us. When you really know about yourself, whether the Buddha is present or not is immaterial."

34. The Awakened Individual

Luangpor Teean said, "As regards the body, there is no difference between the Awakened individual and the ordinary person. It is only in regard to the mind, to the nature and quality of experience, that the Awakened individual is better off and superior to the ordinary person."

35. Following The Way Of Others

We once asked Luangpor Teean why people, despite nowadays studying to high levels and having much knowledge, cannot solve the problem of their own suffering.

He replied, "Most people follow the way of other people, they don't follow the path of their own mind and heart, so things are as they are."

36. The Dead Can Be Of Little Use

Luangpor Teean said that the study and practice of Dharma needed to be pursued here and now. We shouldn't wait until we arrive at death. "After we have died, we can do nothing for ourselves, and our words and example can benefit others only a little. It is while still alive that we can truly benefit ourselves and others."

37. Abstaining From Eating Meat

I once asked Luangpor Teean whether abstaining from eating meat would help one's practice of Dharma. He replied, "If we are to practise or to know Dharma, it doesn't depend on or concern what we eat or refrain from eating. Consider Prince Siddhartha: in attempting to realize Dharma he abstained not merely from meat, he refrained from eating rice and drinking water until he nearly died, yet this brought him no closer to knowing Dharma. Practising and knowing Dharma is a matter of wisdom."

38. Attachment To Meditation Methods

Luangpor Teean once warned, "Attaching to a technique or a method of practising meditation, no matter what technique or method it might be, is like taking a boat to cross a river and then, even though it has arrived at the opposite shore, refusing to leave the boat, because of being caught up in a continuing fascination with the boat and its engine."

39. Doing Good, Doing Bad

I once mentioned to Luangpor Teean that some people doubt the truth of the old saying, "Do good and you'll receive good in return, do bad and you'll receive bad in return."

He pointed out, "It is society that stipulates what is to be regarded as good and bad. What is considered good in one place may be condemned as bad in another. Rather we should establish a new and more accurate understanding, thus: 'Do good, it's *good*; do bad, it's *bad*'."

40. Students

Luangpor Teean once classified people who had been educated into two groups, and compared them as follows. In the first group are those who know clearly or really know: they are wise, and when they speak one can understand immediately. The second group comprises those whose knowledge is a matter only of familiarity and memorizing, so when they speak they will talk at great length and in a way that is evasive and extravagant, or else they will cite the texts a great deal in order to induce others to believe them: this is because they don't really know the truth for themselves.

41. Past, Present, Future

Luangpor Teean always said that the past is gone, incapable of being changed or rectified, while the future has not yet arrived: whatever we do, it must be done in the present. If we act well now, today will constitute a good past for tomorrow. And tomorrow, when it comes, will turn out to be a good future for this day in which we have already done good. It is useless to worry about things that are past and cannot be put right and just as useless to worry about things that have not yet happened: to worry about things that cannot eliminate suffering in the only place it is found, in the present. What is important is to continue to have set into motion the correct set of principals in the past so the fruit beared from those endeavors would be favorably impacting the present. To have that present be a positive experience the suggestion, extracted from the sutras, goes something like:

- 1.) From the first generate only thoughts with the right escort.
- 2.) Support right thoughts already risen.
- 3.) From where thoughts arise, generate no thoughts that carry negative escort.
- 4.) Dispell any negative thoughts already risen ([source](#)).

42. The Resolution

According to the texts, just before his Awakening the prince Siddhartha accepted food from the laywoman [Sujata](#) and, having eaten, placed the tray in the nearby river and made the following resolution: if he was to become fully Awakened, a Buddha, the tray

should float back against the current of the river. And it happened that the tray did float back against the river's current. I asked Luangpor Teean his opinion of this, since it seems to be contrary to the way of nature.

Luangpor pointed out, "Everything must drift along carried by the current of the river. But this story refers to going against the current of the stream of thought as it pours forth. If we were to look back to the source of thought, then we would know the truth this story is pointing to."

43. Working With Awareness

Luangpor Teean constantly declared, "All of us have duties and responsibilities that the society we live in requires us to fulfil, and this is normal. Performing our duties with *sati* (sustained awareness of oneself) will produce results that are completely satisfactory, the best possible results."

44. The Lamplight

Towards the end of his life, when Luangpor Teean's health was deteriorating, my wife expressed to him her deep concern about the teaching of Dharma: what would be the situation after his death?

Luangpor responded, "You needn't worry about this at all. As long as humanity exists, there will from time to time be those that come to know Dharma, because Dharma is not a personal possession that can be monopolized or owned. Dharma was present long before the Buddha's time, but the Buddha was the first to bring it out to teach and propagate. An individual that knows Dharma can be compared to a lamp that lights up brightly in the darkness: one who is close will see clearly, while those further away will see less clearly. After a period of time the lamp's light must be extinguished, but then from time to time the lamp will again be lit, again providing illumination."

45. With Whom Should We Study?

During Luangpor Teean's final hospitalization at Samitivej Hospital, he remarked that now his illness was very advanced all he himself needed to do was to maintain awareness of his breathing, watching for when it would cease. I therefore asked him quite directly, "When you are no longer available, from whom do you recommend that we should study Dharma in order to obtain the best results?"

Luangpor replied, "Go and study Dharma for yourself: watching your own mind is by far the best thing to do."

Luangpor Teean was an Enlightened master from the modern era and his Awakening experience transpired outside formal rituals, thus then, outside formal doctrine as stated in the quote at the top of the page. Others have reached similar heights citing similar experiences. For those who may be interested eight such experiences are presented by going to [**The Awakening Experience in the Modern Era.**](#)

Source: <http://www.angelfire.com/electronic/bodhidharma/teean2.html>